CCH4

Circular Letter No. 511.

March 12, 1908.

To Superintendents.

Gentlemen:--

Preparation on the part of teachers for the work to be done each day in each subject is considered to be of first importance in connection with the solution of problems having to do with improvement in: (1) methods, (2) discipline, (3) interest of the teacher and pupils in their work, and (4) the best use of the time of their disposal.

It would be a help to teachers thoroughly to understand the importance of approaching and passing in their proper order the three steps which characterize successful teaching:

First, the presentation of the new matter or new principle under as favorable conditions as possible: That is, in as close connection as possible with what has already been taught.

Second, the correlation of the new matter or new principle with knowledge already acquired, through the help and direction of the teacher; and

Third, expression on the part of the pupils through the actual use of the new matter or new principle.

The object of the teacher's work is at least supposed

to be that of fitting the pupils for individual work, - that of developing the power or ability to do things for themselves. But in the first place there must be incentive on the part of the pupils; and before incentive can be aroused, there must be interest.

Viewed from the standpoint of the pupil, these three steps would be:

First, coming in contact with and the acquisition of the new fact or principle.

Second, association and combination of the new fact or principle with knowledge formerly acquired; and

Third, the formation of new ideas and the expression of those ideas through the use of the newly acquired, either in connection or not with the facts already known.

That is, there are two gaps over which it is important that the pupils be safely and properly conducted: (a) that between presentation and correlation, and (b) that between correlation and expression.

And from this standpoint it is clear that these three steps mean respectively:

First, that the new lesson be approached wisely through paths with which the pupils are already more or less familiar;

Second, that the pupils be carefully directed in combining what is new and what is already known; and

Third, that opportunity be given for expression on the part of the pupils, of which they shall without any doubt be able to take advantage.

The question of securing and of maintaining interest of sufficient depth and qulity is therefore both one upon which much depends and one which depends upon much: most directly it depends upon the preparation of the teacher.

Each lesson, whether extending only through one period or over a number of periods on different day, must in order to accomplish its object involve three points:

First, review of what in the judgment of the teacher is most useful and most needs review;

Second, the presentation and teaching of the new matter or new principle; and

Third, drill involving both review and what has just been tuaght.

Hence the importance of thought and study in preparation, in the case of each teacher, to adapt the lessons to the particular pupils of their respective shools.

The three steps which characterize good teaching, and the reactions as they may be called on the part of the pupils, as well as the three points involved in each lesson, are all kept in mind by the teacher; they do not appear in the written preparation, or at least not so definitely outlined; but they are rather apparent in the actual work of the teacher with the pupils in the class-room.

The plan Book of a teacher whose preparation for the work of each day has been influenced by a thorough understanding of these principles will bear evidence of that influence and of that understanding.

The teacher whose Plan Book does not show these indications should be helped to such an understanding before serious criticism of the work of teacher and pupils is attempted.

The written preparation need not of necessity be extensive, nor the amount of writing very great: no more than will clearly set forth what will be done; except of course where, as in the case of a Porto Rican teacher giving instruction in English, the Superintendent may require detailed preparation in writing.

The division of the written preparation under each subject into "oral" and "written" is convenient; and aside from the question of convenience, this arrangement is of advantage to the teacher for it is one into which the work naturally divides itself, whether in the mind or on paper.

The oral work certainly must consist in: (a) a certain amount of review, followed by (b) the teaching of the new fact or principle, and finally (c) drill upon both review and the new fact or principle.

The written work to be done by the pupils must also certainly involve all three: (a) review, (b( new fact or principle, and (c) drill;although here the separation could not be so well defined as in the case of the oral work.

Teachers' preparation, the Plan Book, and the written preparation should appeal to you as of sufficient importance to demand immediate serious consideration.

The first step in taking up the matter is to do away with padding the daily plan, by prescribing a form which shall exclude decoration and irrelevant unnecessary detail, and which shall condense the work and present it in an orderly fashion. The following rules cover these points:

1- The day and date in the middle of the line at the head of the day's work.

2- A margin on the left-hand side of each page of at least one inch, and on the right-hand side of one-half inch.

3- In the case of a school in which there is more than one grade, the number of the grade to appear in the middle of the line at the head of the work in that grade.

4- No paragraphs.

5- The name of the subject to be written beginning at the left-hand margin andunderlined, the work in the subject beginning on the same line immediately after the name of the subject.

6- No blank lines.

7- Skip two lines between the work of each day.

The second step is to require, for a series of weeks, an outline of the work to be done in each subject during

the next week, this outline to be taken up and followed in detail in the plans for each day of the week.

The third step is a thorough going over of what is expected in the way of written preparation under way subject, and this must involve a thorough understanding of the three steps already discussed and their corresponding reactions on the part of the pupils, and the three parts of a lesson.

The fourth step would be to require outlines for a series of months, as at first required in the case of each week, the outline to be taken up and followed in detail in the plan for each day of the month.

If the above discussion is not clear, or if you desire additional information and explanation, or if suggestions are desired in connection with particular cases or particular difficulties, or if the Office can be of assistance to you in any way, either by correspondene or in the conduct of conferences on the subject or in other ways, a communication to that effect will be welcomed and will be given every possible attention.

Respectfully,

REA General Superintendent.

Approved

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION.